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Chairman: Mr. Ali ..... (Malaysia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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07-55106 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 127: Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (*continued*)

United Nations Office for Partnerships (A/62/220 and A/62/363)

1. **Mr. Dossal** (Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Partnerships) introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for Partnerships (A/62/220), said that the report provided information on the activities of the United Nations Democracy Fund, the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships and partnership advisory services and outreach.

2. The Office was currently working with a variety of State and non-State actors, including companies, corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individual philanthropists interested in helping to achieve United Nations goals, especially the Millennium Development Goals. In 2006, the Office had handled almost 500 inquiries from the private sector. It expected that Mr. Robert E. Turner would be able to meet his $1 billion commitment and that other partnerships would yield another $1 billion. To date, the Office had mobilized over $560 million in resources, in addition to the commitment from Mr. Turner.

3. In 2006, the United Nations Democracy Fund had attained full operational status as a Trust Fund. At its first Advisory Board meeting in March 2006, the Board had recommended funding 125 projects at a total value of $36 million for democracy-building projects, focused on civic education, democratic dialogue, civil society empowerment, human rights issues and so forth. Detailed information on the Fund's first year of operations was contained in Section III of the report.

4. Section IV of the report described the Office's activities in facilitating partnerships through advisory services and outreach. The Office screened internal and external inquiries and provided advice to United Nations entities and external organizations on the development of programmes, the establishment of global and regional networks and the development of creative financing mechanisms.

5. Bearing in mind the need for quality control, transparency and accountability, the Office was examining ways to tighten its guidelines and convert corporate social responsibility commitments into concrete programmes. The Office also worked with United Nations and private sector focal points to devise a coherent partnership strategy.

6. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/62/363), said that the Committee had been provided with additional information on the status of cash transfers and project implementation by the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, which was annexed to the Committee's report.

7. The Advisory Committee had noted that the United Nations Democracy Fund had become fully operational in 2006 and that it had been included in the Secretary-General's report for the first time. It noted with appreciation that, in addition to the commitment of $1 billion by Mr. Robert E. (Ted) Turner, the United Nations Foundation expected to raise another $1 billion from other partners to support United Nations causes.

8. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should take note of the report of the Secretary-General.

9. **Mr. Hussain** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, since its establishment in 1998, the United Nations Office for Partnerships had allocated approximately $1 billion for 400 projects in critical areas such as children's health, women's issues, the environment and peace and security. The Group appreciated the important work accomplished by the Office worldwide and commended its projects aimed at supporting national efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

10. The Group welcomed the Office's ongoing efforts to obtain a new tranche of $1 billion for United Nations causes. It recognized the Office as a gateway between the United Nations system and the private sector, foundations and civil society, in conformity with the 2005 World Summit Outcome. The fact that hundreds of prospective partners had shown interest in collaborating with the Office attested to its credibility in the private sector. The Group had noted the efforts of the Office to improve programme implementation through lessons learned and it would continue to support its work.

11. Noting that the General Assembly had mandated the Secretary-General to explore ways to establish

partnerships with civil society, the Group wondered whether the Office could develop a mechanism to support the Development Account and financing for development.

12. **Mr. Dossal** (Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Partnerships) said that the Office supported the work of the Financing for Development Office and intended to establish a more formal relationship with both the Development Account and the Financing for Development Office to explore ways to pool their resources for the common good.

13. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to adopt the following oral draft decision on the United Nations Office for Partnerships:

> "The Fifth Committee, having considered the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for Partnerships (A/62/220) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/62/363):
>
> (a) *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/220);
>
> (b) *Endorses* the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/62/363)."

14. *The draft decision was adopted.*

Agenda item 128: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

Revised estimates relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 under sections 17, 20, 21, 27, 28C, 28D, 28E, 28F and 28G to ensure operational preparedness and business continuity in a protracted human influenza pandemic crisis (A/62/328 and A/62/474)

15. **Ms. McDonald** (Director of the Facilities and Commercial Services Division, Department of Management), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the revised estimates relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 under sections 17, 20, 21, 27, 28C, 28D, 28E, 28F and 28G to ensure operational preparedness and business continuity in a protracted human influenza pandemic crisis (A/62/328), said that the emergence of a virulent strain of avian influenza known as A(H5N1) had put the world on alert for a new human pandemic. As at 12 September 2007, a total of 328 human cases and 200 deaths from avian influenza had been reported in 12 countries worldwide since 2003. The recently released *WHO World Health Report 2007* referred to the pandemic influenza as the most feared potential public health emergency of international concern. It was therefore imperative that the United Nations should be prepared for the eventuality of an influenza pandemic.

16. In September 2005, the United Nations had established a United Nations System Influenza Coordinator, who was working with the World Health Organization (WHO), other United Nations entities and external partners to ensure that the United Nations system provided adequate and coordinated support to countries as they controlled avian influenza and prepared for the next human influenza pandemic. Recognizing the importance of pandemic preparedness to the integrity of the United Nations system, its staff and the people it served worldwide, the Secretary-General had issued a directive requiring all United Nations system agencies and offices, including country offices, to prepare for a human influenza pandemic.

17. A pandemic would differ from other crises covered by current crisis management plans, owing to its slow onset, long duration and global reach. An estimated 30 per cent of United Nations personnel and their families could fall ill and absenteeism could reach 40 per cent. The complexity of the situation might be further compounded by a reduced capacity of vendors and the host Government public safety and emergency management institutions.

18. Contingency planning at United Nations headquarters locations and regional commissions had followed specific scenarios that were linked to the World Health Organization's phases of a pandemic, which were global in nature, and had been adjusted to fit the specific local context. The planning aimed to protect the health, safety and security of personnel and physical assets and to ensure the continuation of critical functions and operations.

19. The following critical functions had been identified: the ability of the principal organs (i.e. the Security Council and the General Assembly) to conduct critical meetings and communicate with other organizations and Governments; the ability of the

Secretary-General to represent the Organization, to respond to the needs of the international community, to provide the means for diplomatic discourse and negotiation and to play a global leadership role; the protection of United Nations system personnel and physical assets; the ability to make important operational and policy decisions related to the pandemic and for critical global and field operations and mandates, including peacekeeping and humanitarian operations; the ability to communicate with other organizations and Governments; the maintenance of utilities, telecommunications and information technology services; and the continuation of critical administrative functions.

20. The planning and preparedness process included medical interventions and prevention activities, business continuity and preparatory activities. To avoid any duplication of efforts, careful attention was being given to ensuring that the activities considered in the report — particularly those related to telecommuting strategies, information dissemination and procurement — were harmonized with and complementary to other ongoing activities undertaken by different United Nations organizational units, funds and programmes. For example, the information technology activities complemented those described in the comprehensive report on information and communications technology disaster recovery and continuity of operations for the Secretariat to be submitted to the General Assembly at the current session. It should be noted that business continuity was far broader than information and communication technology requirements.

21. The Secretary-General requested the General Assembly to approve the overall resource requirements under the regular budget arising from the implementation of the proposals contained in the report in the estimated amount of $7,868,600 requested for the biennium 2008-2009 for the United Nations headquarters locations and regional commissions.

22. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the additional information provided to the Advisory Committee on estimated expenditure for 2007, the summary of recurrent and non-recurrent requirements, and the general temporary assistance positions for 2008-2009 were annexed to its report on the revised estimates (A/62/474). While recognizing the need for contingency planning for a protracted human influenza pandemic crisis, the Advisory Committee was of the opinion that a prudent and well-coordinated approach ought to be followed across the United Nations system. It had recommended a comprehensive approach to business continuity requirements, including those arising in the event of a human influenza pandemic, as well as those related to disaster recovery and business continuity in the area of information and communications technology, for which a separate report was being submitted to the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee's recommendations were to be found in paragraph 14 of its report. The General Assembly might wish to approve the revised estimates for 2008-2009 subject to those recommendations.

23. **Mr. Hussain** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group recognized the threat posed by the virulent strain of avian influenza to humankind, including United Nations staff. The Organization's efforts in terms of preparedness to deal with the potential hazards were commendable, in particular the appointment of a United Nations System Influenza Coordinator, an inter-agency steering committee, and coordinators at all duty stations, and the formulation of guidelines and contingency plans by the Pandemic Senior Emergency Policy Team.

24. The Group would welcome clarification of the assumptions underlying the resources requested in the Secretary-General's report, in particular the assumption that the pandemic would have an impact on 30 to 40 per cent of United Nations personnel and might affect all duty stations, as well as information on consultations with WHO and national health authorities in the preparation of the report. The Advisory Committee had offered useful advice on business continuity requirements, a matter to be supervised by the Chief Information Technology Officer instead of being dealt with on a piecemeal basis. The Group was generally in agreement with the Advisory Committee's other comments and recommendations on medical intervention and prevention, capacity-building and training.

25. **Mr. Mukai** (Japan) said that Japan had been cooperating with the United Nations System Influenza Coordinator. Since a stock of knowledge and information had been accumulated by United Nations institutions, notably WHO, through such cooperation by Member States, recourse should be had to that stock before any special measures of preparedness were

introduced. In particular, the establishment of a special unit dealing solely with avian influenza should be approached with caution: he wondered whether agencies such as WHO had such special units.

26. A piecemeal approach to business continuity should be avoided: all the requirements should be collated by the Chief Information Technology Officer and a comprehensive report should then be submitted to the General Assembly at its resumed sixty-second session. The requirements of medical intervention and prevention could be met by the emergency medical measures introduced by the host countries of duty stations, by the Organization's existing medical services, and by the existing package of medical insurance. In the case of capacity-building and training, the Organization should have recourse to the existing resources and experience, particularly those of WHO, before new resources were requested.

27. His delegation would like to have responses on those points before discussing the budget proposals in greater detail.

28. **Mr. Ramos** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, noted that certain activities discussed in the report dated back to the establishment of the United Nations System Influenza Coordinator in September 2005. He therefore wondered why the revised estimates had not been included in the Secretary-General's report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 but were issued in a separate document.

29. **Ms. McDonald** (Director of the Facilities and Commercial Services Division, Department of Management), responding to the issues that had been raised, said that the pandemic plans had been validated externally in July 2007 to ensure that the plans and their accompanying budgets were in line with best practices. The requirements for headquarters had not been altered but minor changes had been made to the requirements for other locations. In a few cases, the requirements had even been increased.

30. The role of WHO was to reduce human exposure to the A(H5N1) virus; strengthen the pandemic early warning system; put in place measures that might contain an emerging pandemic influenza at its source; and increase the capacities of countries in the international community. It was not concerned with the management of operations during a protracted emergency. The role of the United Nations System Influenza Coordinator was to provide support to Governments and country teams.

31. In reply to the comments regarding the use of a piecemeal approach to business continuity requirements, she pointed out that the proposals contained in the report were structured to complement the comprehensive report on information and communications technology disaster recovery and continuity of operations for the Secretariat, which would be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

Agenda item 126: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

United Nations Secretariat Consolidated Report 2006 (A/62/164 and A/62/352)

32. **Ms. Hurtz-Soyka** (Chief of the Office of Oversight and Internal Justice, Department of Management), introducing the note by the Secretary-General (A/62/164) transmitting the *United Nations Secretariat Consolidated Report 2006*, recalled that in its resolution 60/283 the General Assembly had taken note of the intention of the Secretary-General to submit a second consolidated report with the aim of enhancing the transparency of the Organization and the accountability of the Secretariat to Member States and had emphasized that the report should be developed in the context of paragraphs 68 and 69 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/60/870) on the *Consolidated Report 2005*. The Assembly had further emphasized that the *Consolidated Report 2006* would not replace the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization required under Article 98 of the Charter. Accordingly, the main goal of the exercise was to promote transparency and accountability by providing, in a single annual document in all six official languages, performance and financial information currently found in a variety of other locations. The *Consolidated Report 2006* did not replace any other report.

33. The *Consolidated Report 2006* linked policy priorities, programme activities and resources and discussed management challenges and corrective actions taken or planned, providing a strategic overview of the Secretariat's most significant accomplishments and challenges in 2006 and a frank analysis of the Organization's performance. It focused

on the results achieved and the progress made towards the attainment of the Secretariat's goals in 10 priority areas, illustrating the value provided by the Secretariat in the light of the priorities. The Secretariat believed that the Member States would find the combination of performance and financial information in one report a more useful method of indicating how it spent its funding and the programmatic results thereof.

34. The *Consolidated Report 2006* also included an analysis by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) of the most serious management and performance challenges facing the Secretariat and an assessment of its progress in addressing them. It also reproduced the executive summary of the report of the United Nations Board of Auditors on peacekeeping operations for the financial period ended 30 June 2006.

35. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the *United Nations Secretariat Consolidated Report 2006* (A/62/352), said that, in his comprehensive management reform proposals in his reports on "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (A/60/692 and Corr.1 and A/60/846/Add.4), the Secretary-General had proposed the production of a single comprehensive annual report containing both the financial and programme information necessary for assessing the Organization's performance and management of resources. That report was intended to be a tool for enhancing the transparency and accountability of the Secretariat to Member States and to the public at large. In its report on those proposals (A/60/870, paras. 68 and 69), the Advisory Committee had emphasized the need to define more clearly the purpose of the consolidated report and the target audience. It had pointed out that an attempt to provide a single report to serve the needs of both the general public and Member States might result in a document which was too technical for the former and too general for the latter.

36. There remained ambiguity about the target audience. While the Advisory Committee recognized that efforts had been made to provide fuller information on the weaknesses of and the challenges faced by each department, it was not convinced that the *Consolidated Report 2006*, as currently presented, improved transparency or accountability in any significant way. It therefore recommended that the publication of the *Consolidated Report* should be discontinued. It did welcome, however, the succinct overview provided of the distribution of the regular budget and other assessed and extrabudgetary resources by strategic performance activity, as well as the summary of the Secretariat's financial performance. It noted that such synthesized comprehensive data, consolidated in one place, were not found in other public documents. Such data could be provided to Member States in the annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.

37. **Mr. Guerber** (Switzerland) said that, while the Secretariat's effort to provide an overview of its accomplishments and challenges was welcome, as was its presentation of its budget, expenditures and staffing, the *Consolidated Report 2006* still left room for improvement. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that the target audience must be defined more clearly; the publication should in fact be aimed at governmental officials, members of parliament, the academic world and non-governmental organizations, for their support of the Organization must not be taken for granted.

38. With regard to the Advisory Committee's comment that the *Consolidated Report 2006* did not reflect the impact of the work of other United Nations bodies and non-governmental partners, it might indeed be useful to expand the coverage over time, but in view of the complexity of the mandates and structures of the members of the United Nations family a less ambitious, incremental approach would be better. Some of the areas of priority to the Member States were underrepresented: it would be interesting to know more about the way in which the structure of the document had been arrived at and about means of striking a better balance between editorial space and content relevance. The possibilities of reducing the cost of producing future reports should be explored: there was no need, for example, for publication to be synchronized with the calendar year; synchronization with the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization would make the gathering of information easier and cheaper. It was not clear why the Secretariat had recruited an external consultant instead of tapping the capacities of the Department of Public Information.

39. Since the *Consolidated Report* offered a unique opportunity to make a broader audience more aware of the work of the United Nations, the Committee should seek ways of improving it and moving it beyond the prototype stage.

40. **Mr. Golovinov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation attached great importance to increasing the transparency and accountability of the Secretariat to the Member States, which should indeed be the goal of the production of an annual consolidated report. Pursuant to section V of General Assembly resolution 60/283 the Secretariat was to have submitted the first such report to the Committee for a decision on the usefulness of the exercise. Instead, the *Consolidated Report 2005* had been published, without authorization by the General Assembly and only in English, and placed on sale in the United Nations Bookshop. Moreover, despite the indignation at that move expressed by the overwhelming majority of delegations at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, the publication remained on sale. The Secretariat should immediately withdraw it, and OIOS should be requested to identify the Secretariat officials who had authorized its issuance, with a view to obtaining compensation for the financial loss caused to the Organization. His delegation would also like to know why OIOS had not already carried out such an investigation.

41. The Advisory Committee had rightly expressed concern at the failure of the *Consolidated Report 2006* to increase the transparency and accountability of the Secretariat: although the note by the Secretary-General did indeed refer in that connection to section V of General Assembly resolution 60/283 and to paragraphs 68 and 69 of the Advisory Committee's earlier report, those documents had clearly been disregarded in its preparation. It was also surprising that the Secretariat had recruited an external consultant instead of having recourse to the Department of Public Information. His delegation requested information on the total amount of financial resources spent on the production of the two consolidated reports. It endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation that publication should be discontinued.

42. **Mr. Hussain** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group fully endorsed the Advisory Committee's comments and recommendations.

43. **Ms. Hurtz-Soyka** (Chief of the Office of Oversight and Internal Justice, Department of Management), replying to the matter raised by the representative of the Russian Federation, said that the *Consolidated Report 2005* had been on sale for a very limited time and that only about 100 copies had been sold before it had been withdrawn. On the point raised by the representative of Switzerland, she said that the structure of the *Consolidated Report 2006* had been based on the strategic priorities set out in the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.

44. **Mr. Golovinov** (Russian Federation) said that he had visited the United Nations Bookshop just before delivering his statement: the *Consolidated Report 2005* was still on sale.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.